

**Providing Access to
High Quality Career
Focused Education:**

BTEC Firsts Results
November 2021





Contents

BTEC Firsts Results 2021

Introduction: BTEC Firsts Results 2021

Slides 4 - 8

Learner Completion: BTEC Firsts Results 2021

Slides 9 -18

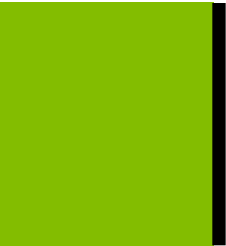
Learner Achievement (Grade outcomes and technical reporting)

Slides 19 - 26



BTEC is the leading internationally recognised qualification in career education

Supporting student progression to HE, careers & lifelong learning



BTEC Firsts L2 qualifications

BTEC Firsts provide both Key Stage 4 and Post-16 learners with the opportunity to take a vocational qualification in their chosen area of study.

In schools, learners have the opportunity to study a BTEC First Award (120 GLH) in their chosen subject as part of their wider KS4 programme of study. For post-16 learners BTEC Firsts offer learners the Certificate (240 GLH), Extended Certificate (360 GLH) or Diploma (480 GLH) as their main focus of study.

Many of these students are on their journey into UK sectors that are currently in great demand. Included in the class of 2021 are many future healthcare professionals, engineers and construction workers who are so vital to the UK's economy.

There is increasing demand from young people for BTEC courses in UK schools. The combination of traditional academic learning with vocational and transferable skills allows young people to prepare for the possibilities that will be opened to them as the careers of the future evolve.



Awarding the BTEC Firsts in 2021

The approach to awarding grades this summer reflected the continued disruption that learners had faced to their teaching and learning due to the ongoing pandemic. The DfE and Ofqual, the regulator for both vocational and general qualifications, set the regulatory framework which all awarding organisations had to work within to issue results.

In line with the process for A level and GCSE results, schools and colleges were asked to determine a final 'Q-TAG' (Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade) for each of their BTEC students - a holistic judgement based on the evidence they have of the learner's performance in the qualification.

This evidence was from banked assessments that have already taken place, alongside alternative forms of evidence, like classwork, or mock assessments.

Pearson conducted external quality assurance so that the grades awarded across the system can command confidence. It helps that teacher-led internal assessment has always been a large part of how BTECs are graded, so we used a repurposed version of this familiar and established assessment process to underpin the way we awarded qualification results this year.

As in every year, there was an appeals process in place.



Summary overview of BTEC Firsts

Key headlines

- As these are legacy qualifications, there has been a decrease in entry volumes across all qualification sizes as centres continue to transition to the L1/L2 Tech Awards which started to be introduced in a phased approach in 2018.
- The First Award (120 GLH) size remains by far the most popular size. The First Award is equivalent to a GCSE and can be delivered alongside other KS4 qualifications.
- Sport, Music, Travel & Tourism, Business & ICT are the five most popular sectors.
- Overall outcomes have remained broadly stable with 2020.



Introduction: Understanding BTEC Firsts Results 2021

BTEC Firsts 2021 - Overview

The following pages show the outcomes of BTEC qualifications for Level 1/2 Firsts for the academic year 2020-21. The outcomes from previous years have been included for comparison.

The availability of the Level 1/Level 2 BTEC Tech Awards qualifications since 2018 has seen a notable volume of centres transitioning to these new qualifications.

Cohort and Completion

The results published this year represent achievement for learners in UK schools and further education establishments (FE) for the 2020/21 full academic year. They represent learners at a cohort level, i.e. those that were expected to complete in 2020/21. This provides a picture of the results for BTEC Firsts over the year. Performance tables report on completion rates, so the inclusion of this data aligns these results closely with national reporting.

Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. However, it may be they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.



Introduction: Understanding BTEC First Results 2021

Qualification suites and qualification frameworks

The current suite of BTEC First qualifications at Level 1/2 (GCSE level) were developed to sit within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). These specifications were introduced for first teaching in 2012.

Although it is convenient to refer to NQF qualifications using the qualification framework applicable when they were developed, it should be noted that the current qualification framework is the RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework), which was introduced in 2015.

The academic year

The academic year for the purpose of this results publication is from 1 September to 31 August; results are grouped according to the academic year in which they are projected to complete the qualification.

2021
Learner
completions

BTEC Firsts

Level 1/2
qualifications

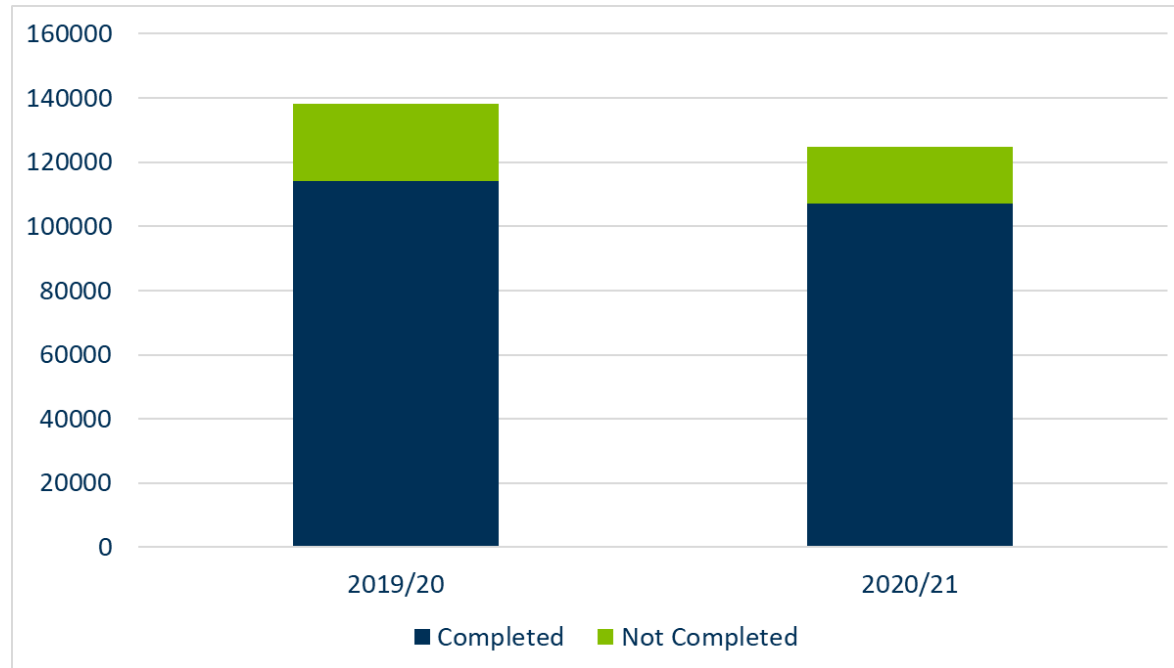


Interest in completing a BTEC remains strong

BTEC Firsts Cohort Overview

The size of the BTEC Firsts cohort as whole has decreased in 2020/21 compared to the previous year.

The introduction of the BTEC Tech Awards qualifications has impacted on the cohort volumes for the BTEC Firsts in some subject areas.



Completed: learners who completed by the end of the specified course duration and were awarded a qualification grade.

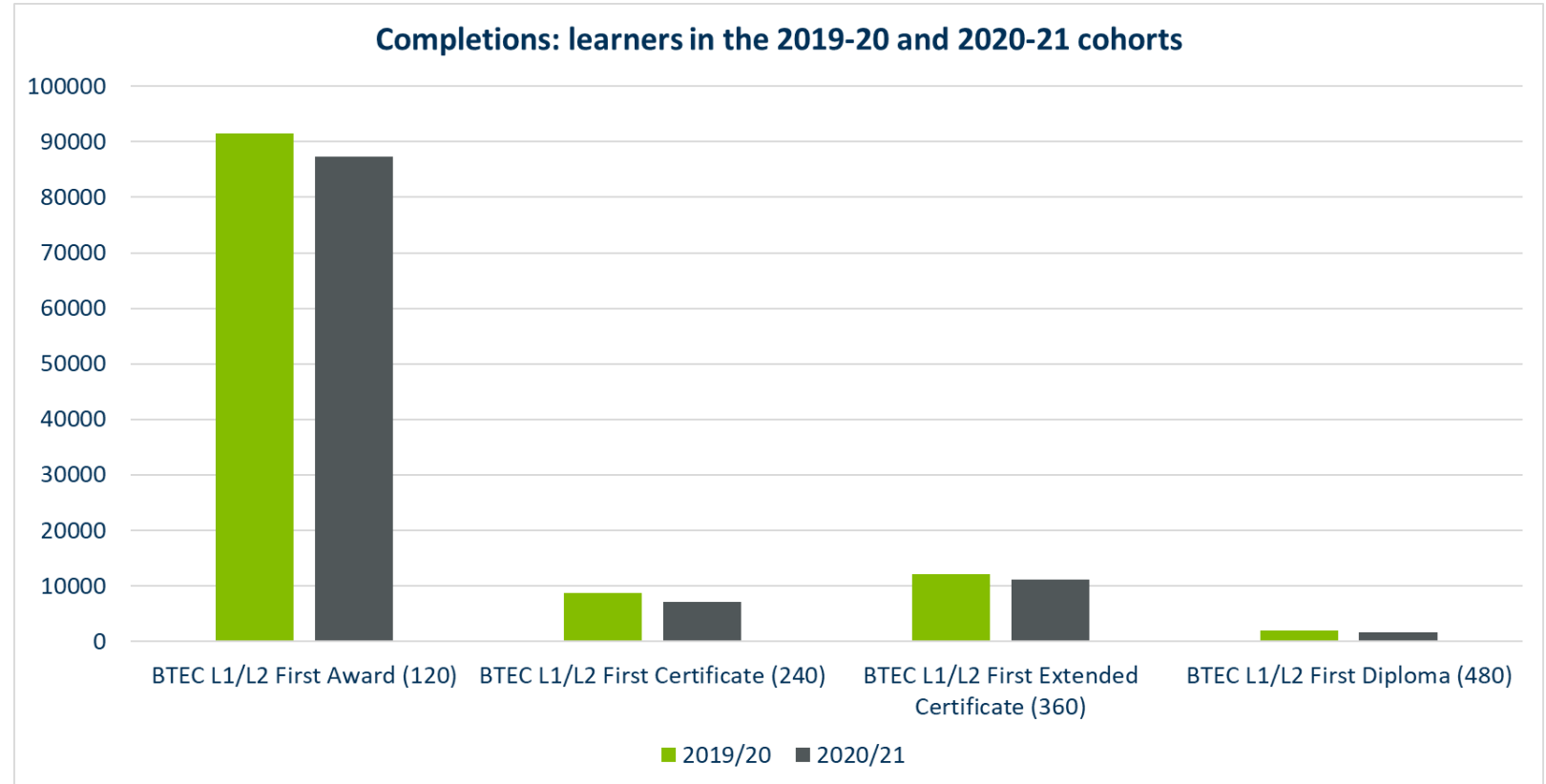
Not completed: learners who withdrew, claimed fallback, or were yet to complete at the end of the specified course duration.

The BTEC First Award is most popular with learners

Cohort Overview by Qualification Size

These figures show the different size (different GLH) qualifications available on the BTEC Firsts (NQF).

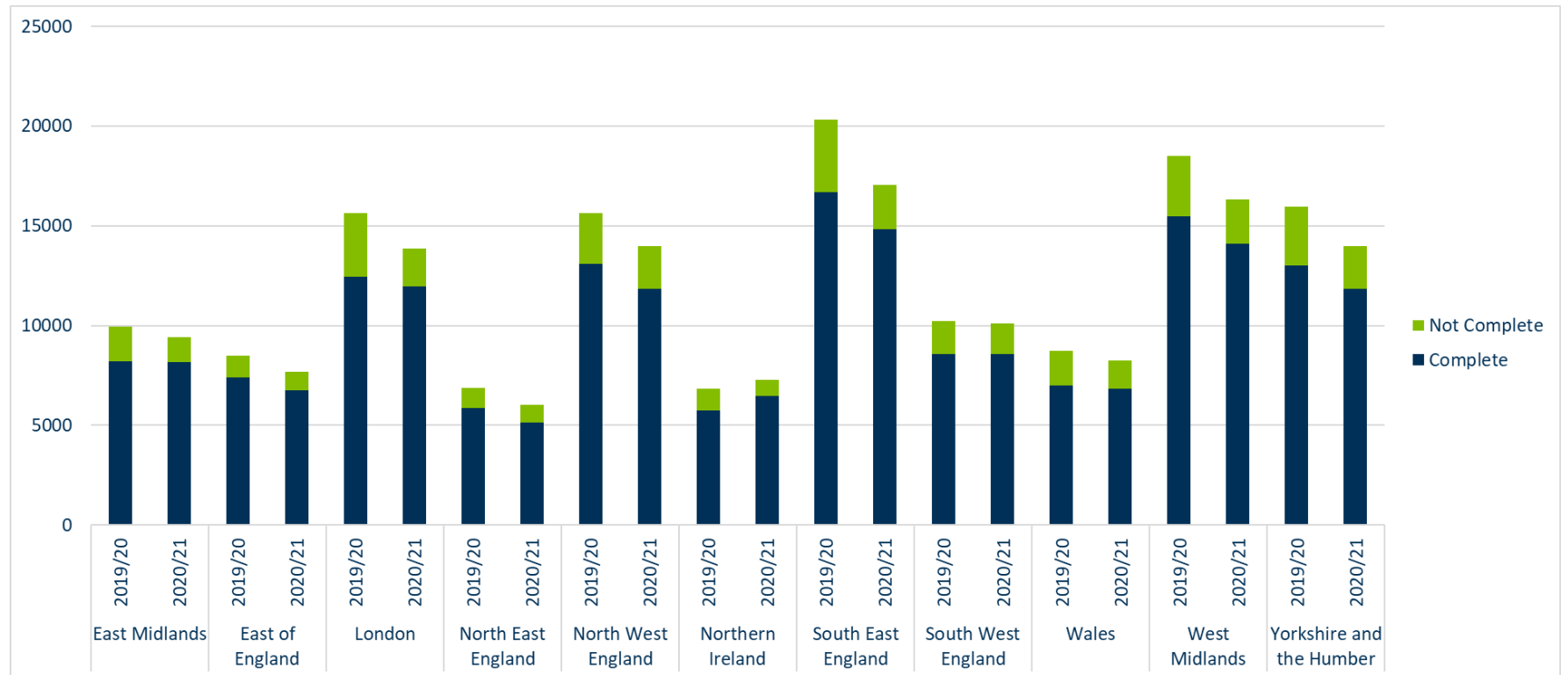
The First Award is the most popular size qualification for the BTEC Firsts. Most learners take this as a two year course.



BTEC continues to appeal to learners nationwide

BTEC Firsts: an overview of volume by region

In 2020/21 the West Midlands had the most learners and South East England has the second highest number of learners



Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. However it may be they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.

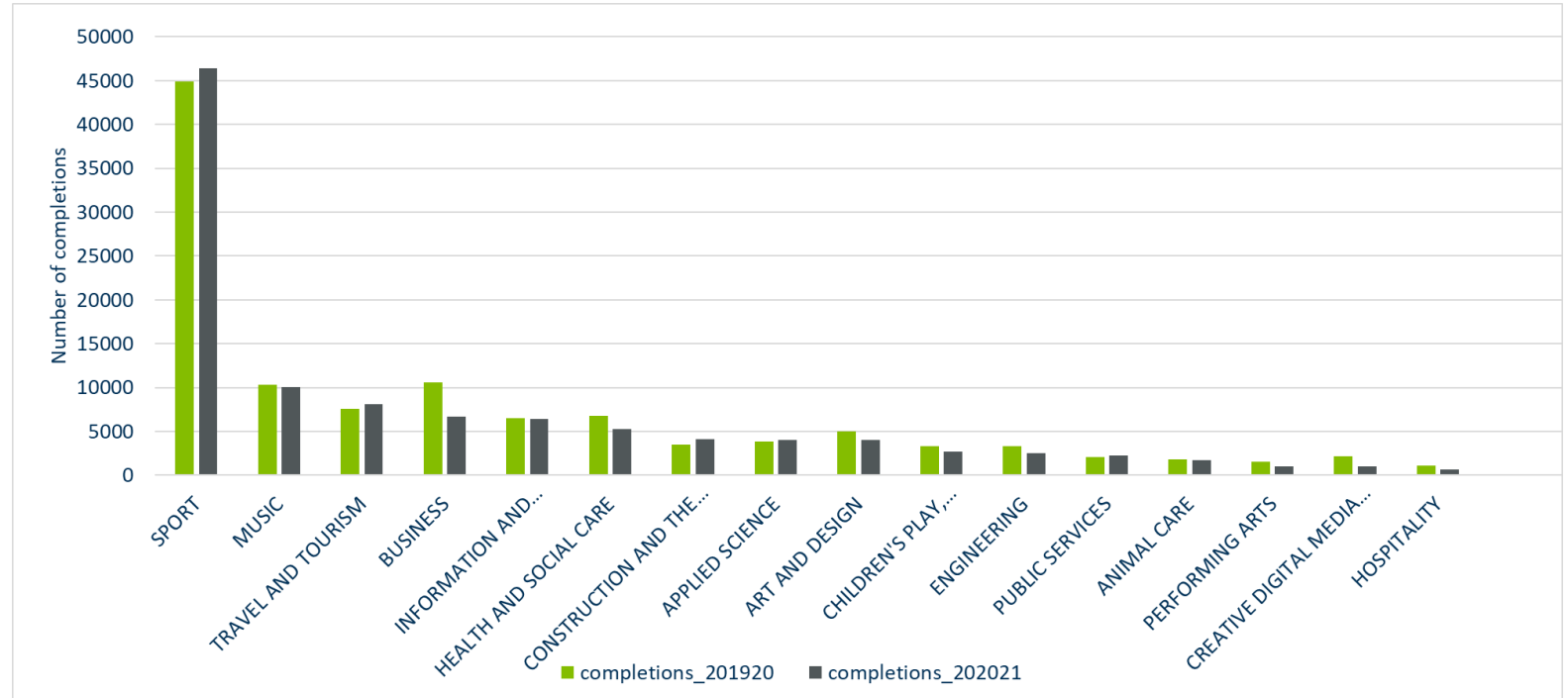
Completions by Sector

BTEC Firsts: completions by sector

The chart shows the number of completed qualifications for sectors with more than 250 learners.

There was a slight increase in the number of completions for Sport, the most popular subject, in 2020/21.

There has been a notable decrease in the numbers taking many subjects, as centres migrate across to the new BTEC Tech Awards in these subjects.



Learners increasingly seek pathways to sectors with employability growth

Sector	Cohort		Completion	
	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
Sport	52,600	52,500	44,900	46,400
Music	12,000	11,500	10,400	10,100
Travel And Tourism	9,200	9,900	7,500	8,200
Business	13,300	8,300	10,600	6,700
ICT	7,900	7,300	6,500	6,500

BTEC Firsts: cohort and completion – top 5 sectors in 2020/21

There was a slight increase in the number of completions for Sport and Travel and Tourism in 2020/21.

Numbers are fairly stable for some qualifications, though all these sectors are affected by growing numbers taking the BTEC Tech Awards.

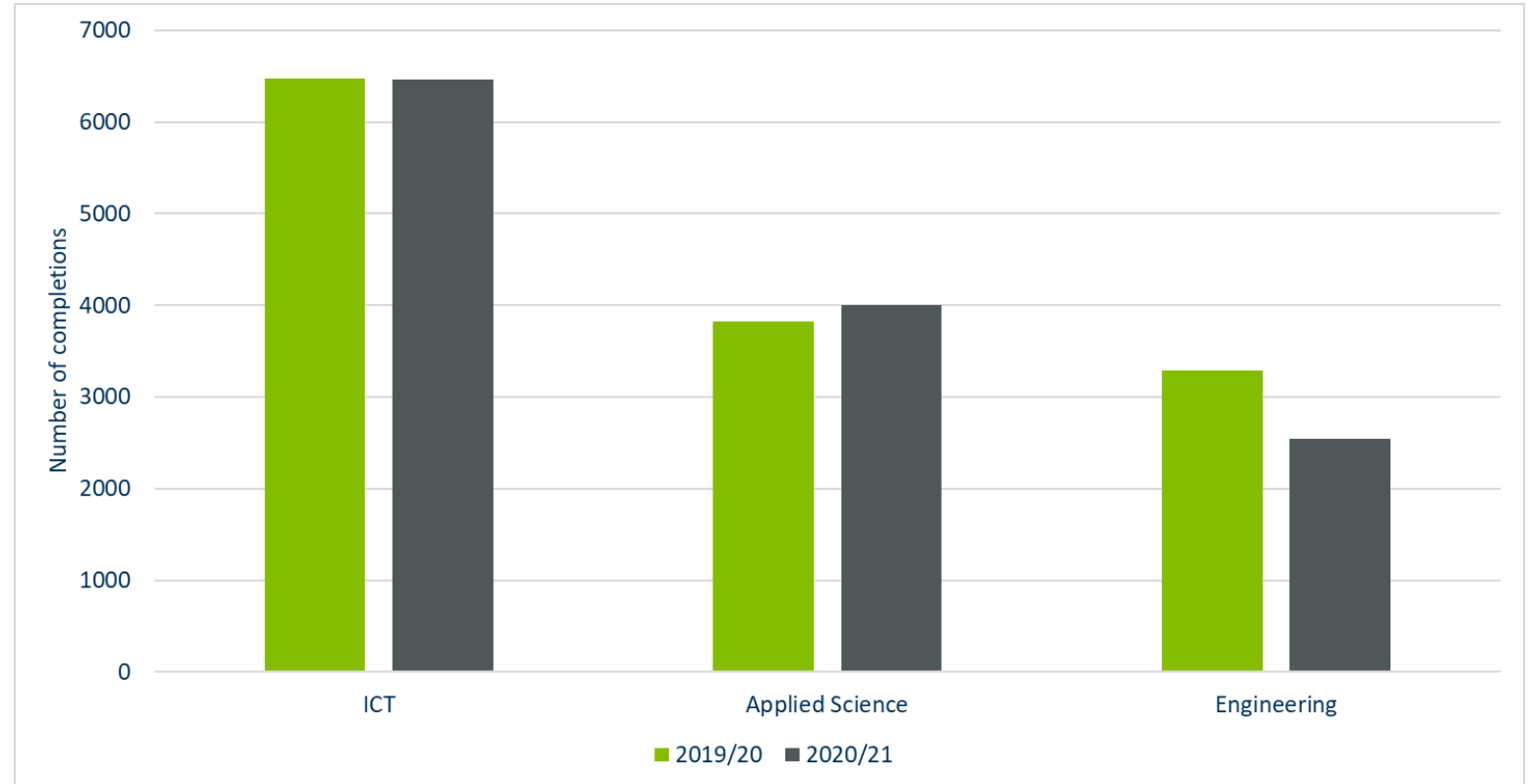
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Completions in STEM Sectors

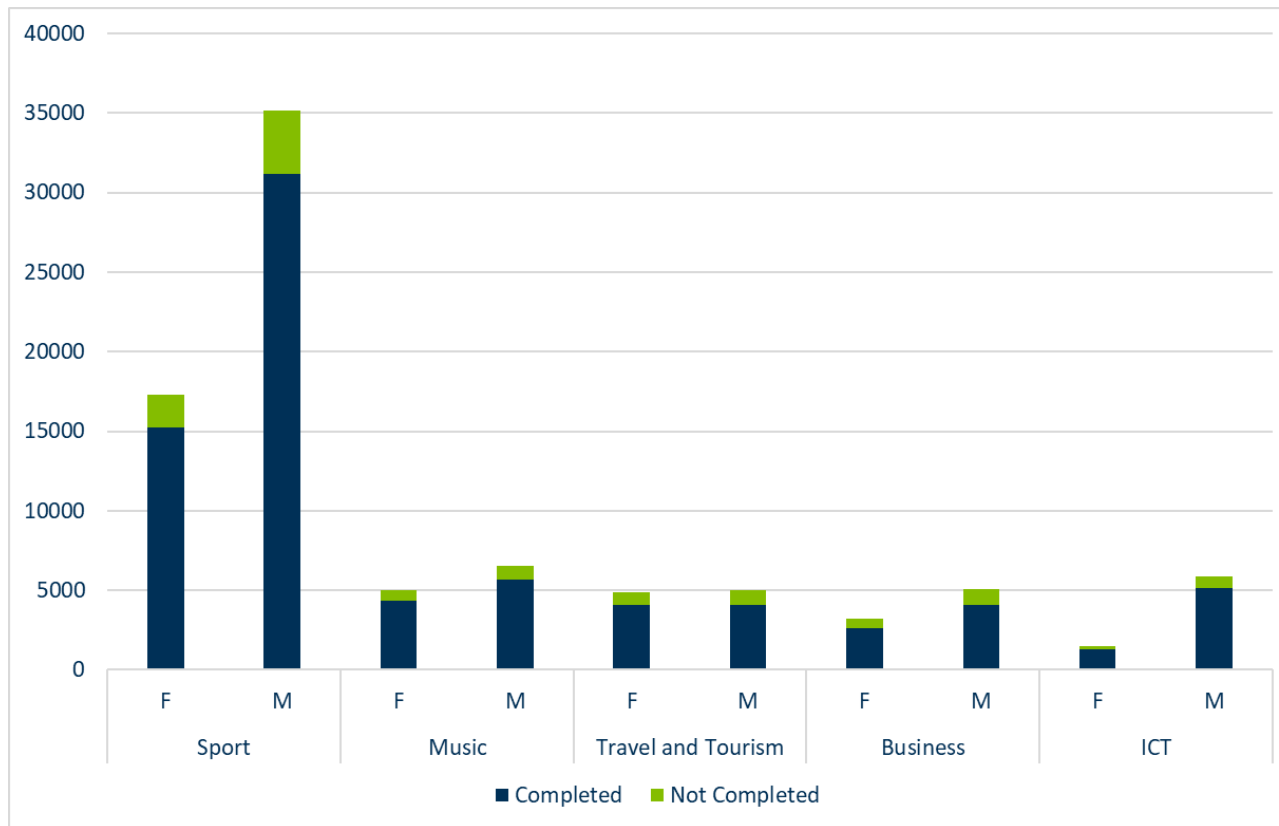
BTEC Firsts: completions in STEM sectors

Registration figures for ICT are fairly stable in 2020/21, with a slight increase in the number of completions for Applied Science.

Numbers are growing for Engineering on the BTEC Tech Awards, so it is expected that there are fewer on the BTEC Firsts.



Gender differences exist among subject choice



BTEC Firsts: 2020/21 top 5 sectors by volume and gender

Learners taking the most popular sectors on the BTEC Firsts are more likely to be male, as centres have adopted the BTEC Tech Awards for the sectors most popular with female learners, such as Health and Social Care. Results for the Tech Awards are published separately.

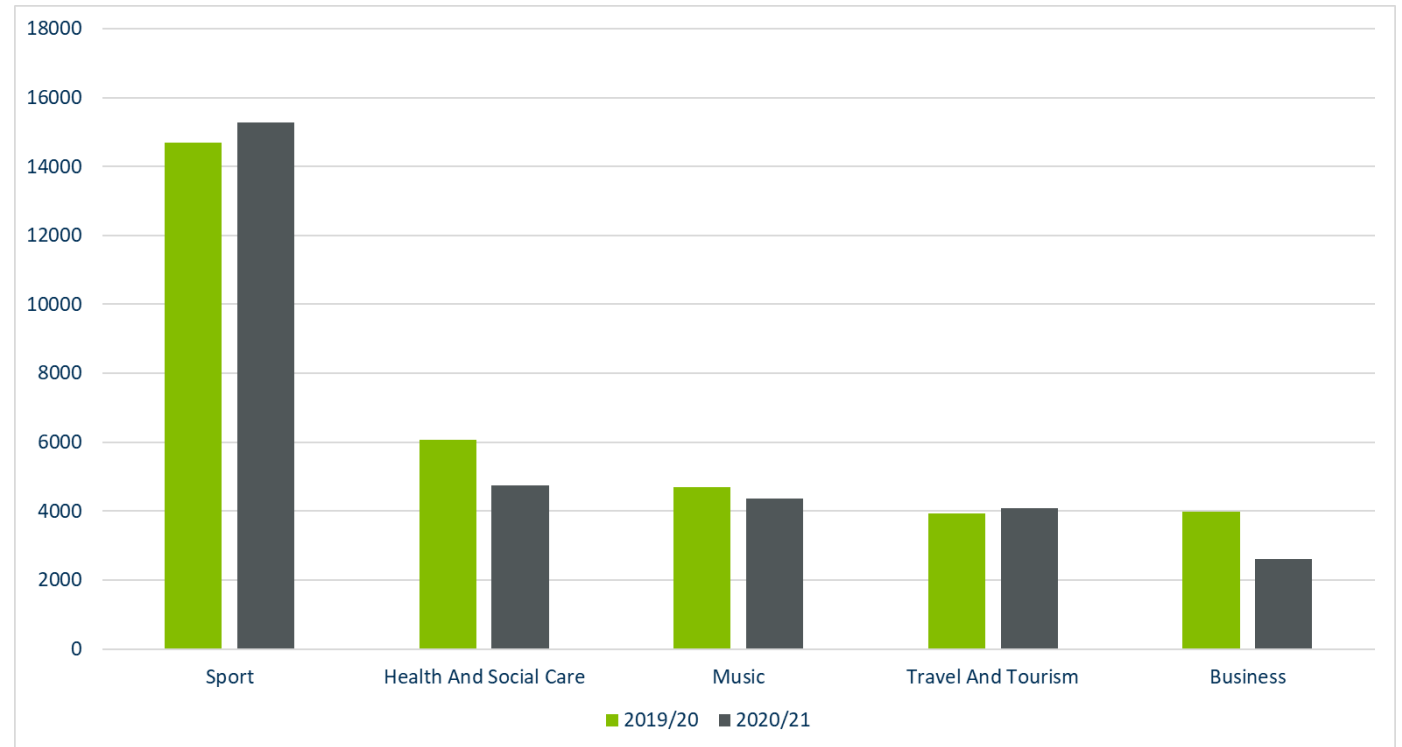
Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. However it may be they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.

Sport continues to be of interest to male and female learners

BTEC Firsts: top 5 sectors for female learners by completion volume

Sport is the most popular sector for both male and female learners and numbers in 2020/21 are fairly stable in this sector.

The BTEC Firsts in Health and Social Care are still popular with female learners, though many centres have adopted the BTEC Tech Awards.

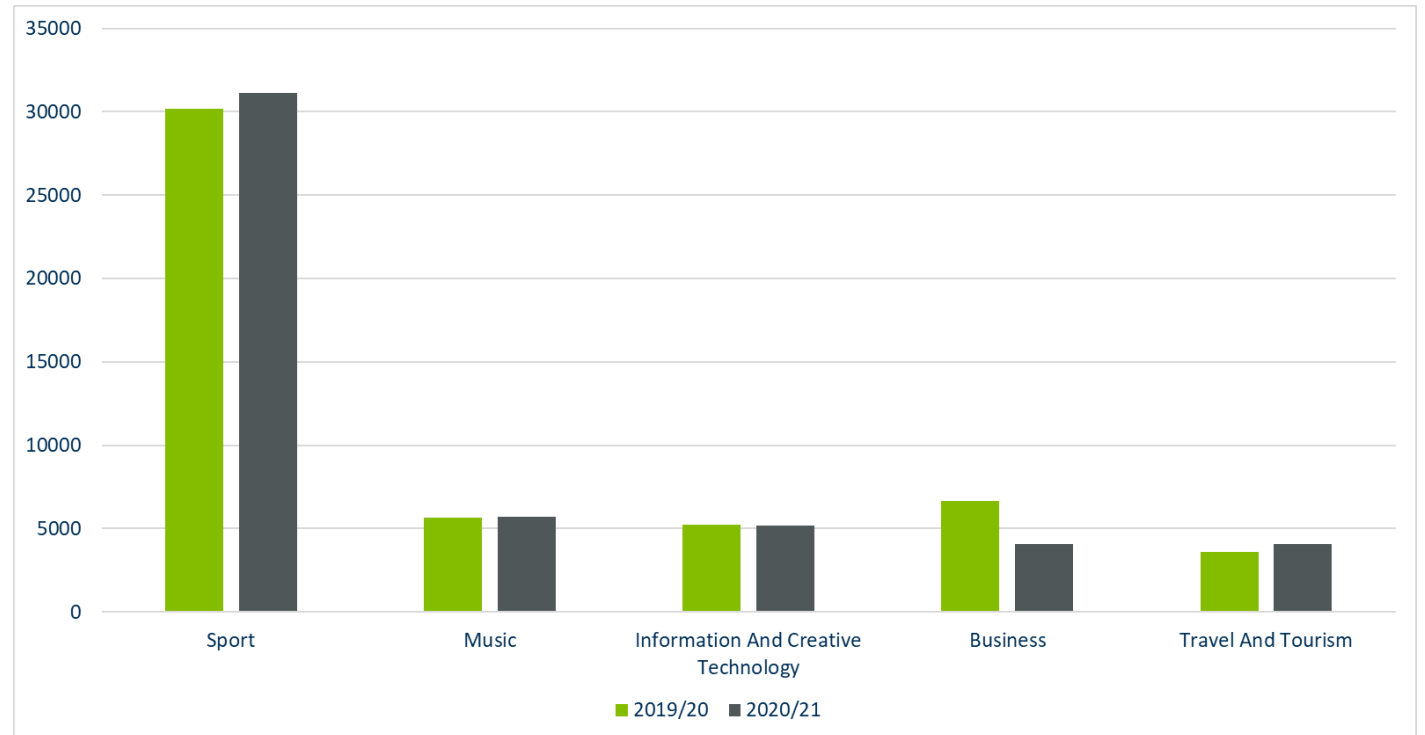


Sport continues to be of interest to male and female learners

BTEC Firsts: top 5 sectors for male learners by completion volume

Sport is the most popular sector for both male and female learners and numbers in 2020/21 are fairly stable in this sector.

The number of male learners is also fairly stable for Music, ICT and Travel and Tourism.



2021 Learner achievement - BTEC Firsts

Level 1/2 qualifications
Grade outcomes and
technical reporting



BTEC Level 1 / Level 2 Firsts (NQF) grades explained

Qualification Grade	Grade name
D*	Distinction Star
D	Distinction
M	Merit
P	Pass
L1P	Level 1 Pass
U	Unclassified

The BTEC Level 1 / Level 2 Firsts (NQF) have four grades at Level 2 (Distinction Star, Distinction, Merit and Pass) and one grade at Level 1 (Level 1 Pass).

Learners passing the First Award (120 GLH) at Level 2 are awarded single grades,

e.g. D. Learners passing the Certificate (240 GLH), Extended Certificate (360 GLH) or Diploma (480 GLH) at Level 2 are awarded double grades, e.g. DM.

Learners who have met the standard for a Pass at Level 1 but not at Level 2 are awarded a Level 1 Pass (1) on all sizes of the qualification.

Learners who have not met the standard for a Level 1 Pass are graded U (Unclassified) on all sizes of the qualification.

BTEC Firsts achievement by year (single grades) - 2021

BTEC Firsts achievement: grade distribution overview

For the BTEC First Award (NQF, 120 GLH). Grades at pass and above for these qualifications are awarded as a single grade, e.g. D. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Cohort	D*	D	M	P	L1P	U	Not completed
2019-20	110,300	13.6%	10.7%	24.5%	23.9%	8.9%	1.4%	17.0%
2020-21	101,100	14.2%	10.8%	25.5%	26.5%	7.9%	1.3%	13.7%

The awarding of grades in 2019/20 and 2020/21 were completed under extraordinary regulatory conditions in place during that time. Therefore, comparisons to historical years should be viewed with caution.

Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. However it may be they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.

BTEC Firsts achievement by year (double grades) - 2021

BTEC Firsts achievement: grade distribution overview

For these qualifications: Certificate (NQF, 240 GLH), Extended Certificate (NQF, 360 GLH), Diploma (NQF, 480 GLH). Grades at pass level and above for these qualifications are awarded as two grades, e.g. DM. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Cohort	D*D*	D*D	DD	DM	MM	MP	PP	L1P	U	Not completed
2019-20	28,000	3.9%	2.2%	2.9%	9.2%	11.9%	16.9%	23.4%	9.3%	1.2%	19.1%
2020-21	23,700	3.2%	1.9%	3.4%	7.6%	12.1%	12.6%	32.7%	7.7%	3.0%	16.0%

The awarding of grades in 2019/20 and 2020/21 were completed under extraordinary regulatory conditions in place during that time. Therefore, comparisons to historical years should be viewed with caution.

Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. However it may be they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.

BTEC Firsts achievement by gender (single grades) - 2021

BTEC Firsts achievement: gender and grade overview

For the BTEC First Award (NQF, 120 GLH). Grades at pass and above for these qualifications are awarded as a single grade, e.g. D. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Gender	Learners in the gender cohort	Gender cohort as a percentage of annual cohort	Percentage of gender cohort with each outcome						
				D*	D	M	P	L1P	U	Not completed
2019-20	Female	44,200	40.1%	18.2%	12.2%	24.4%	20.9%	7.0%	1.1%	16.2%
	Male	66,100	59.9%	10.6%	9.7%	24.6%	25.9%	10.1%	1.6%	17.5%
2020-21	Female	40,300	39.9%	18.8%	12.3%	25.5%	22.9%	5.7%	1.0%	13.9%
	Male	60,800	60.1%	11.2%	9.9%	25.5%	29.0%	9.3%	1.5%	13.6%

As in the previous year, there is a higher proportion of male learners than female learners. The shift to the new BTEC Tech Awards in subject areas of interest to female learners is one factor impacting on these proportions. Female learners' performance was better on average, with a higher percentage of female learners being awarded the highest grades (D and above).

Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. However it may be they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.

BTEC Firsts achievement by gender (double grades) - 2021

BTEC Firsts achievement: gender and grade overview

For these qualifications: Certificate (NQF, 240 GLH), Extended Certificate (NQF, 360 GLH), Diploma (NQF, 480 GLH). Grades at pass level and above for these qualifications are awarded as two grades, e.g. DM. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Gender	Learners in the gender cohort	Gender cohort as a percentage of annual cohort	Percentage of gender cohort with each outcome									
				D*D*	D*D	DD	DM	MM	MP	PP	L1P	U	Not completed
2019-20	Female	12,700	45.3%	4.7%	2.8%	3.6%	11.6%	13.4%	16.6%	20.9%	7.3%	0.9%	18.2%
	Male	15,300	54.7%	3.3%	1.6%	2.3%	7.2%	10.7%	17.3%	25.5%	10.9%	1.4%	19.8%
2020-21	Female	9,800	41.5%	4.9%	2.6%	4.2%	9.4%	13.5%	12.9%	28.6%	6.1%	2.3%	15.5%
	Male	13,800	58.5%	2.0%	1.3%	2.7%	6.3%	11.0%	12.3%	35.7%	8.8%	3.5%	16.3%

As in previous years, there is a higher proportion of male learners than female learners. In each year, female learners' performance was better across the range, with a higher percentage of female learners being awarded higher grades (MM and above) and a higher percentage of male learners being awarded lower grades (PP and below).

Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. However it may be they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.

BTEC Firsts achievement: most popular sectors (single grades) - 2021

BTEC Firsts achievement: gender and grade overview for the 5 largest sectors

For the BTEC First Award (NQF). Grades at pass and above for these qualifications are awarded as a single grade, e.g. D. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Gender	Learners in the gender cohort	Gender cohort as a percentage of annual cohort	Percentage of gender cohort with each outcome						
				D*	D	M	P	L1P	U	Not completed
Business	Female	1,400	40.5%	11.5%	10.8%	20.8%	26.7%	5.5%	2.1%	22.6%
	Male	2,000	59.5%	7.7%	7.7%	20.9%	31.8%	9.8%	2.8%	19.5%
ICT	Female	1,000	32.4%	8.0%	16.6%	23.2%	33.3%	5.8%	2.5%	10.7%
	Male	2,100	67.6%	4.5%	12.6%	21.8%	37.3%	10.0%	2.8%	11.1%
Music	Female	4,900	43.5%	22.7%	12.7%	27.3%	18.9%	4.9%	0.7%	12.8%
	Male	6,400	56.5%	13.7%	11.6%	27.3%	24.9%	8.5%	1.3%	12.6%
Sport	Female	16,900	33.7%	23.3%	13.7%	26.3%	19.0%	5.2%	0.9%	11.7%
	Male	33,300	66.3%	13.8%	11.2%	27.4%	26.8%	8.0%	1.5%	11.3%
Travel and Tourism	Female	4,400	48.0%	12.3%	10.3%	26.2%	26.7%	8.2%	0.8%	15.5%
	Male	4,700	52.0%	7.0%	5.6%	20.5%	33.0%	13.5%	1.5%	18.9%

Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. However it may be they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.

BTEC Firsts achievement: most popular sectors (double grades) - 2021

BTEC Firsts achievement: gender and grade overview for the 5 largest sectors

For these qualifications: Certificate (NQF, 240 GLH), Extended Certificate (NQF, 360 GLH), Diploma (NQF, 480 GLH). Grades at pass level and above for these qualifications are awarded as two grades, e.g. DM. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Gender	Learners in the gender cohort	Gender cohort as a percentage of annual cohort	Percentage of gender cohort with each outcome									
				D*D*	D*D	DD	DM	MM	MP	PP	L1P	U	Not completed
Business	Female	1,900	37.8%	4.1%	2.8%	3.5%	9.0%	11.7%	12.4%	30.2%	6.4%	2.9%	17.0%
	Male	3,100	62.2%	2.7%	1.5%	2.6%	6.3%	10.7%	11.4%	34.4%	8.3%	2.7%	19.5%
ICT	Female	500	10.9%	3.2%	2.8%	6.2%	12.3%	9.6%	11.9%	30.9%	6.0%	4.3%	13.0%
	Male	3,800	89.1%	1.5%	1.3%	3.5%	7.7%	10.2%	12.3%	35.7%	10.9%	4.0%	12.8%
Music	Female	100	30.4%	12.7%	9.1%	9.1%	5.5%	7.3%	10.9%	21.8%	5.5%	0.0%	18.2%
	Male	100	69.6%	5.6%	4.8%	2.4%	13.5%	11.9%	11.1%	21.4%	5.6%	0.0%	23.8%
Sport	Female	300	15.5%	3.2%	0.9%	3.8%	8.2%	15.8%	15.2%	31.7%	5.6%	1.2%	14.4%
	Male	1,900	84.5%	0.8%	0.6%	2.2%	4.0%	10.2%	13.5%	42.5%	8.3%	2.7%	15.3%
Travel and Tourism	Female	500	61.1%	2.3%	3.0%	3.6%	7.9%	10.2%	15.3%	31.4%	5.9%	2.5%	17.8%
	Male	300	38.9%	1.7%	1.7%	4.0%	6.3%	11.3%	10.7%	36.0%	6.3%	1.7%	20.3%

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Pearson